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DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS
BY
JOAN MANNING-SANDERS

DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS

BY

JOAN MANNING-SANDERS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

R. H. WILENSKI

NEW YORK

WILLIAM EDWIN RUDGE

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1929

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INTRODUCTION

JOAN MANNING-SANDERS is now sixteen years of age. All the drawings and paintings reproduced in this book were done before her sixteenth birthday. She first appeared before the London public in the *Daily Express* Young Artists' Exhibition at the R.B.A. Galleries in 1927 when she was thirteen. There she exhibited two oil paintings: 'The Pedlar' (Pl. 16) and 'David with the Globe' (Pl. 17). In the following year she appeared at the Royal Academy with the oil painting 'The Brothers' (Pl. 22) that was hung on the line; and this year the Academy hung her 'Concertina Players' (Pl. 29) in a place of honour.

* * * * *

Joan was born at Tor Cross in South Devon on 17th May 1913. Her father is George Manning-Sanders, who writes short stories and novels that are ranked as literature by those competent to judge; her mother is Ruth Manning-Sanders, poet and novelist, author of the long narrative poem 'The City', which won the Blindman International Poetry Prize in 1926, and of 'Zachy Trenoy', 'Waste Corner', and 'Hucca's Moor'.

Till Joan was born her parents lived in a caravan; and during her early years they retained the caravan instinct—though the caravan itself was abandoned—and they continually moved their home. Between 1914 and 1927 'we find them,' as biographers say, successively at Bude and Newlyn in Cornwall, at Midhurst in Sussex, at Catchal in Cornwall, at Grasse behind Cannes, back again at Catchal, and then at Sennen Cove, a few miles from Land's End, where they live to-day. Joan herself has never been to school. Her education from the age of five to the age of twelve was conducted by a governess, Miss Florence Bridge, who helped her to set about her first pictures. Miss Bridge—still referred to affectionately in the family as 'Bridget'—taught Joan and her brother David (two years her junior) to visualize their history and their Bible; she encouraged them to put down their images on paper, and to refer to nature or to books when their mental images were incomplete.

I spoke recently to Joan about the drawings reproduced in Pls. 2-7, which were done before she was twelve. 'For the "Jericho" costumes,' she said, 'we went to the library. We (that is Bridget and David and I) made cardboard models of the Egyptian chariots in the "Joseph" picture and I copied the tree in the "Ark" picture from one just outside our garden. . . . I made the mule look sly in the Absalom picture because I thought that, being a mule, he had done it on purpose. . . . I drew the faces in the "Elijah" out of my head and hated them afterwards.'

At this stage, when the family was installed at Catchal, Father Bernard Walke of St. Hilary appears. He is a friend of George Manning-Sanders; he sees Joan's drawings and commissions her to do a set of water-colours of New Testament subjects for his church. Joan, now twelve and independent both of David and Miss Bridge, did the drawings for Father Walke in the course of the next year. They are reproduced in Pls. 8-13. The first three were done at Catchal and the Cornish landscape with its characteristic stone hedges has been well observed. The King's horse (Pl. 8) was drawn from the family horse 'Tom', the dog from the family dog 'Luck', the boy was David, and Mrs. Manning-Sanders posed for the King. George Manning-Sanders supplied the hands for Joseph (Pl. 9). The 'Annunciation' (Pl. 11) was drawn at Grasse, where the family went in 1925, and where they remained for the best part of a year. At Grasse, too, Joan made the drawing of her brother David (Pl. 14). The last two panels of the St. Hilary series, done after the return to Catchal, seem to me notable; I like especially 'The Adoration', where the character, both of the conception and the observation, is much like that of early Italian Gothic painting as I understand it.

* * * * *

At thirteen Joan acquires her first outfit of oil paints. Her parents move to Sennen and Cornish artists begin to take an interest in her work. Joan now feels—or her advisers feel—that she has sown her wild oats of imaginative composition long enough; that she is now past twelve and must learn the painter's business and become a copying machine. Working in this new spirit she paints the pictures reproduced in Pls. 15-17 which well-known artists drop in to

criticize. 'Heather', she is told, is too much like linoleum in texture; 'The Pedlar' and 'David with the Globe' are praised—as well they may be from certain standpoints—seeing that the painter's eye is amazingly keen, and that her mind has noted not only the charming surface and colour of the globe in which David's finger is reflected, and the charming character of the boy's head, but also the dirt in the broken nails of the pedlar's fingers.¹

* * * * *

At fourteen Joan, as you see, has the best part of naturalistic copying in her pocket; and when she paints 'Old Andrew' (Pl. 19) she is ready to make experiments in formalization, witness the beard—a frolic in the manner of the Old Masters for which she was severely lectured by a visiting man of letters, who pointed out that an artist cannot be formal in one part of a picture and naturalistic in the others without destroying that inherent unity within the picture which alone can convince the spectator—a comment which, of course, is entirely true.

'Old Andrew' has a decorative *plein air* background of a Cornish bay seen from a height, and for this juxtaposition of an artificial background Joan was also reprimanded, this time by one of her adult colleagues of the brush. So in 'Gracie,' her next picture, she appears as a reformed character, placing the model against a black background, and copying her appearance against it in the proper tradition of the schools. But she does not remain a docile naturalist for long. 'Young Andrew' (Pl. 21) is painted in the same year—'Young Andrew', where the figure is painted from nature, while the *décor*, a Cornish garden with its bird, butterfly, and water barrel, is placed round it, and a decorative backcloth showing a Cornish wall, a donkey on a hill side, and a herbaceous border, is painted unashamedly behind. I do not know what Joan's friends said about 'Young Andrew' which seems to me a natural and delightful develop-

¹ Ruskin wrote of Murillo's 'Spanish Peasant Boys' in the Dulwich Gallery as follows: 'We all know that a beggar's bare foot cannot be clean; but there is no need to thrust its degradation into the light. . . . Do not call this the painting of nature; it is mere delight in foulness.' Ruskin would presumably have disapproved of Joan's 'Pedlar' as much as he would have delighted in her 'David.'

ment from the 'Absalom' and the 'Adoration' of the earlier years, but I suspect that their comments drove her to the 'Self portrait' of 1928 (Pl. 23), which is the sort of picture that some old man approaching eighty submits to the Academy each year, and which Joan painted at fifteen in 1928.

* * * * *

But 1928 is nevertheless a vintage year for our artist. For it produces 'Bertha Louisa' (Pl. 26) where the face is perceived with intelligence, and the light frock is painted with a feeling for the medium that recalls the Douanier himself; then 'The Baby' (Pl. 28) which shows that Joan has enjoyed the tender drawing in the Mother and Child pictures which give Harold Harvey his place in the history of English art; then 'Vellendreath' (Pl. 27) demonstrating that art school studies can be produced without attendance at an art school; then the portrait of Mr. H. S. Cowper (Pl. 25) who, I imagine, went down to Sennen wanting a portrait in the manner of 'David and the Globe' and got it; and then 'The Ploughing Match' (Pl. 24) which shows that Joan has memories of reproductions of pictures by Stanley Spencer stored somewhere in her head. 'The Brothers' (Pl. 22) though exhibited in 1928 was completed before the end of the previous year; this, in my view, is her best work up to the present, and one so remarkable that I must speak of it at greater length.

* * * * *

Those acquainted with Cézanne's pictures of 'The Card Players' have naturally assumed that Joan had reproductions of these pictures in her mind when she set about this picture. But when I showed her reproductions of the Cézanne pictures the other day she told me that she had not seen any of them before. She also told me that 'The Brothers' was in fact painted from three brothers and not, as I had assumed, from one model in three different positions. I asked her, at the same time, about the right-hand picture on the wall. It seemed to me unlike the style of any artist with whose work I was acquainted, and I suspected that she had composed it 'out of her head.' The fact is that the picture represents a scene observed by Joan through a doorway in the inn where she made the first charcoal sketch,

Joan, it would seem, was thus moved to paint this picture partly by her interest in the facial resemblance of these brothers, and partly by her general interest in the scene in the local 'pub.' When she made her preliminary drawings—for she makes full-size charcoal studies which she transfers to canvas—she adopted a pyramidal composition for her central group based on an impression of the two seated men and one standing (or is it seated?) between them, and for the rest she described the specific details of the scene, the specific resemblance of the men's faces, the glass thought of as a glass of beer, the draughts thought of as draughts, the matchboard panelling as matchboard panelling, the nails supporting the picture frame as nails. She approached her technical problems in much the same way that Holbein approached the problem of 'The Ambassadors,' and she carried it through in the same spirit, except that whereas Holbein was painting diplomats at a Tudor Court and working for his living and so thought it prudent to leave out wrinkles, Joan working in the enviable freedom of childhood and in an artists' colony in Cornwall thought it only natural to put them in. 'The Brothers,' consistent in idea and execution, is undeniably an original descriptive work of art.¹

* * * * *

With the exhibition of 'The Brothers' in the Royal Academy, Joan became a celebrity. She was hailed as a prodigy in the newspapers; at the Private View real live Duchesses shook her by the hand; and her picture was sold for a sum that would have made Rymerswael or Holbein jealous.

It is very hard for a painter to become or remain an artist after a success at Burlington House. For success of this kind has the power to change the whole orientation of the next year's work. Unconsciously perhaps, but it would seem inevitably, the artist is led to work the next year with a view to repeating and increasing the previous year's success—whereas before that success his activity had

¹ There is of course no comparison possible between Joan's wrinkle painting without *arrière pensée* in 'The Brothers' and the satirical wrinkle painting of Rymerswael or Quentin Metsys in their pictures of Tax Collectors at their work.

been, from the material and social standpoints, without goal. Joan, I fear, succumbed, as so many others in her position have succumbed before her. The 1929 Academy has received the 'Concertina Players' which is larger than 'The Brothers' and has five figures against the previous three. This picture shows influences of many of the different kinds of painting that habitually appear at Burlington House; and, in my judgement, it is hybrid both in motive and in execution. But it was much applauded on Varnishing Day and at the Private View; and Joan may be said to have scored with it a second Academy success.

* * * * *

And what now? Which path will this quiet, obstinate, and most intelligent child choose in the next few years of her adolescence when her future is at stake? Will she decide that Academy successes are worth having, and rationalize this material decision into a half-believed conviction that success at the Academy cannot be artistically quite undeserved? Will she recognize that for 'standing out' in the Academy her painting is still too flat and unobtrusive, and learn to fill frames with life-size, full-weight figures that come forward and shake each spectator by the hand? Will she choose this path and become an A.R.A.?

Or will she abstain from sending pictures to the Academy for the next five years, and devote herself to painting and drawing enlargements of her own actual and imaginative experience without reference to potential applause or censure from the Royal Academy, or friends or critics or the press?

I cannot say; and I would not if I could. But I like to think of her as the painter of 'Young Andrew' and 'The Brothers', and above all as the creator of that mule.

R. H. WILENSKI.

LIST OF PLATES

1. ADAM AND EVE. Done in 1921, at the age of eight. Pastel, 8 by 6 in.
2. THE ISRAELITES MARCHING ROUND THE WALLS OF JERICHO. Done in 1921. Pastel, 15 by 11 in.
3. JOSEPH GOING UP TO BURY HIS FATHER. Done in 1922. Pastel, 15 by 11 in.
4. THE EGYPTIANS PURSUING THE ISRAELITES THROUGH THE RED SEA. Done in 1922. Pastel, 15 by 11 in.
5. KING DAVID DANCING BEFORE THE ARK. Painted in 1923. Water Colour, 15 by 11 in.
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10. AN ANGEL APPEARING TO THE SHEPHERDS. Painted in 1925 for St. Hilary Church, Cornwall. Water Colour, 18 by 12 in.
11. THE ANNUNCIATION. Painted in 1925 for St. Hilary Church, Cornwall. Water Colour, 18 by 12 in.
12. THE GLORIFICATION. Painted in 1926 for St. Hilary Church, Cornwall. Water Colour, 18 by 12 in.
13. THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS. Painted in 1926 for St. Hilary Church, Cornwall. Water Colour, 18 by 12 in.
14. 'DAVID'. Drawn in 1925. Pencil, 15 by 12 in.
[*In the possession of Miss Elizabeth Manning*]
15. 'HEATHER'. Painted in 1926. Oils, 12 by 10 in.
[*In the possession of the Artist*]
16. THE PEDLAR. Painted in 1926. Oils, 17 by 15 in.
[*In the possession of George Manning-Sanders*]
17. DAVID AND THE GLOBE. Painted in 1927. Oils, 22 by 22 in.
[*In the possession of Ruth Manning-Sanders*]
18. RAVEN AND SKULL (Unfinished). Painted in 1927. Oils, 22 by 20 in.
19. OLD ANDREW. Painted in 1927. Oils, 20 by 18 in.
20. 'GRACIE'. Painted in 1927. Oils, 30 by 25 in.
21. YOUNG ANDREW. Painted in 1927. Oils, 15 by 12 in.
22. THE BROTHERS. Painted in 1928. Oils, 36 by 34 in.
[*In the possession of Captain Ernest A. Elgee*]

23. SELF PORTRAIT. Painted in 1928. Oils, 20 by 15 in.
24. THE PLOUGHING MATCH. Painted in 1928. Oils, 30 by 22 in.
25. H. S. COWPER, ESQ., J.P., F.S.A. Painted in 1928. Oils, 22 by 17 in.
[*In the possession of H. S. Cowper, Esq.*]
26. BERTHA LOUISA. Painted in 1928. Oils, 25 by 17 in.
27. 'VELLENDREATH'. Painted in 1928. Oils, 12 by 10 in.
28. THE BABY. Painted in 1928. Oils, 22 by 14 in.
29. THE CONCERTINA PLAYERS. Painted in 1929. Oils, 58 by 56 in.
[*In the possession of Sir Woolmer White, Bart.*]
30. DETAIL NO. 1 FROM 'THE CONCERTINA PLAYERS'.
31. DETAIL NO. 2 FROM 'THE CONCERTINA PLAYERS'.
32. DETAIL NO. 3 FROM 'THE CONCERTINA PLAYERS'.

PLATES

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ADAM AND EVE

Done in 1921, at the age of eight

Pastel, 8 by 6 in.



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THE ISRAELITTES MARCHING ROUND THE WALLS OF JERICHO

Done in 1921

Pastel, 15 by 11 in.



PLATE 3

JOSEPH GOING UP TO BURY HIS FATHER

Done in 1922

Pastel, 15 by 11 in.



PLATE 4

THE EGYPTIANS PURSUING THE ISRAELITES THROUGH THE RED SEA

Done in 1922

Pastel, 15 by 11 in.

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea
upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto
them on their right hand and on their left.
And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them
to the midst of the sea.

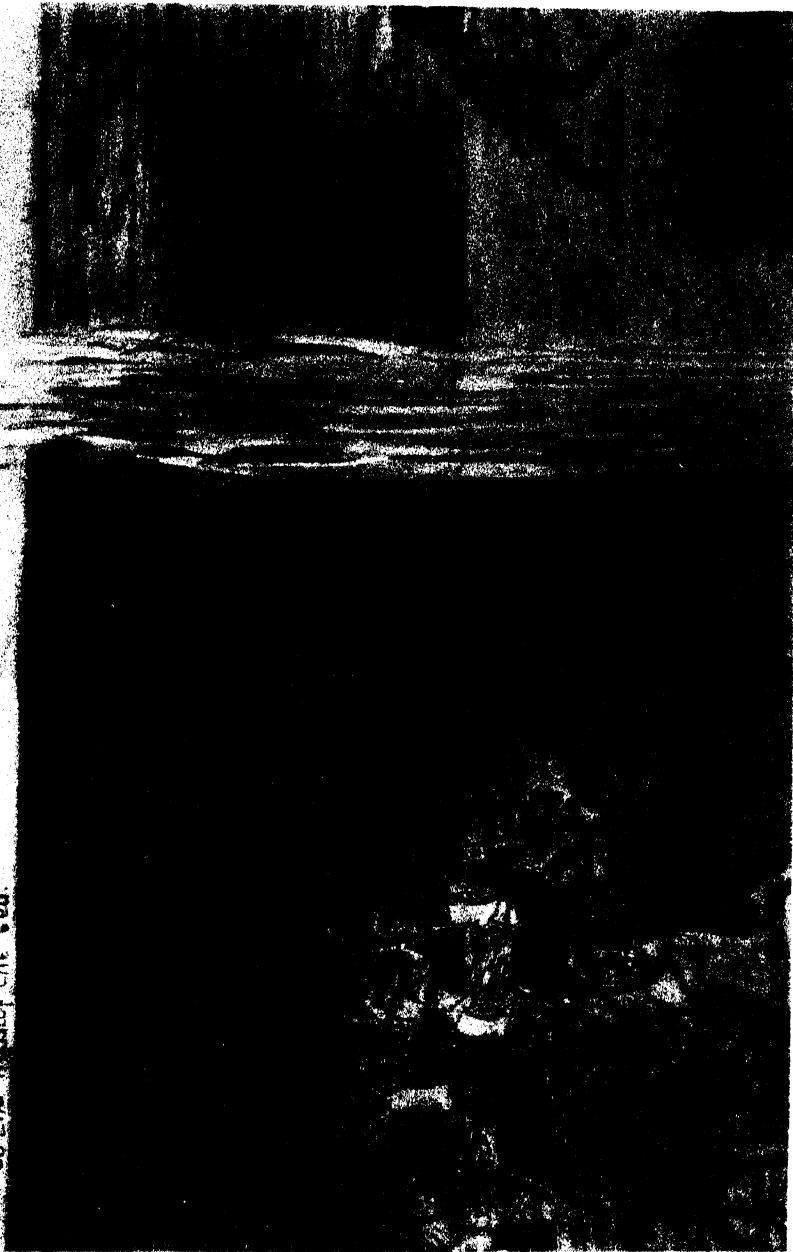


PLATE 5

KING DAVID DANCING BEFORE THE ARK

Painted in 1923

Water Colour, 15 by 11 in.



And David danced before the Lord with all his might, and David was girded with a linen ephod.... And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michol... looked through a window and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord.

PLATE 6

THE DEATH OF ABSALOM

Painted in 1924

Water Colour, 15 by 11 in.



*And Abraham rode upon a mule, and the mule
went under the thick boughs of a great oak
and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was
taken up between the heaven and the earth; and
the mule that was under him went away.*

PLATE 7

ELIJAH AND THE FLAMING ALTAR

Painted in 1924

Water Colour, 15 by 11 in.



PLATE 8

A KING FOLLOWING THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Painted in 1925 for St. Hilary Church, Cornwall
Water Colour, 18 by 12 in.

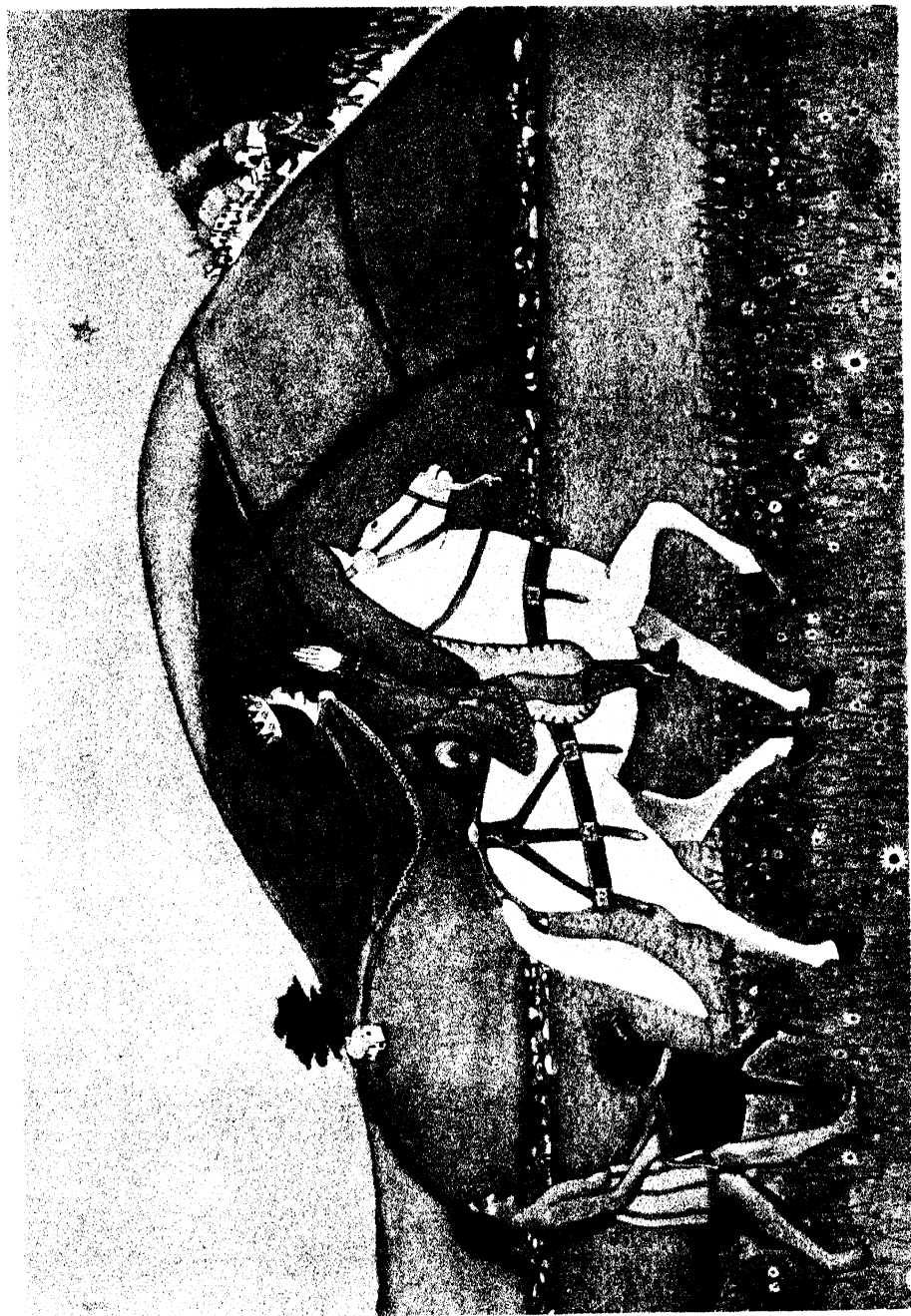


PLATE 9

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Painted in 1925 for St. Hilary Church, Cornwall
Water Colour, 18 by 12 in.



PLATE 10

AN ANGEL APPEARING TO THE SHEPHERDS

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PLATE 11

THE ANNUNCIATION

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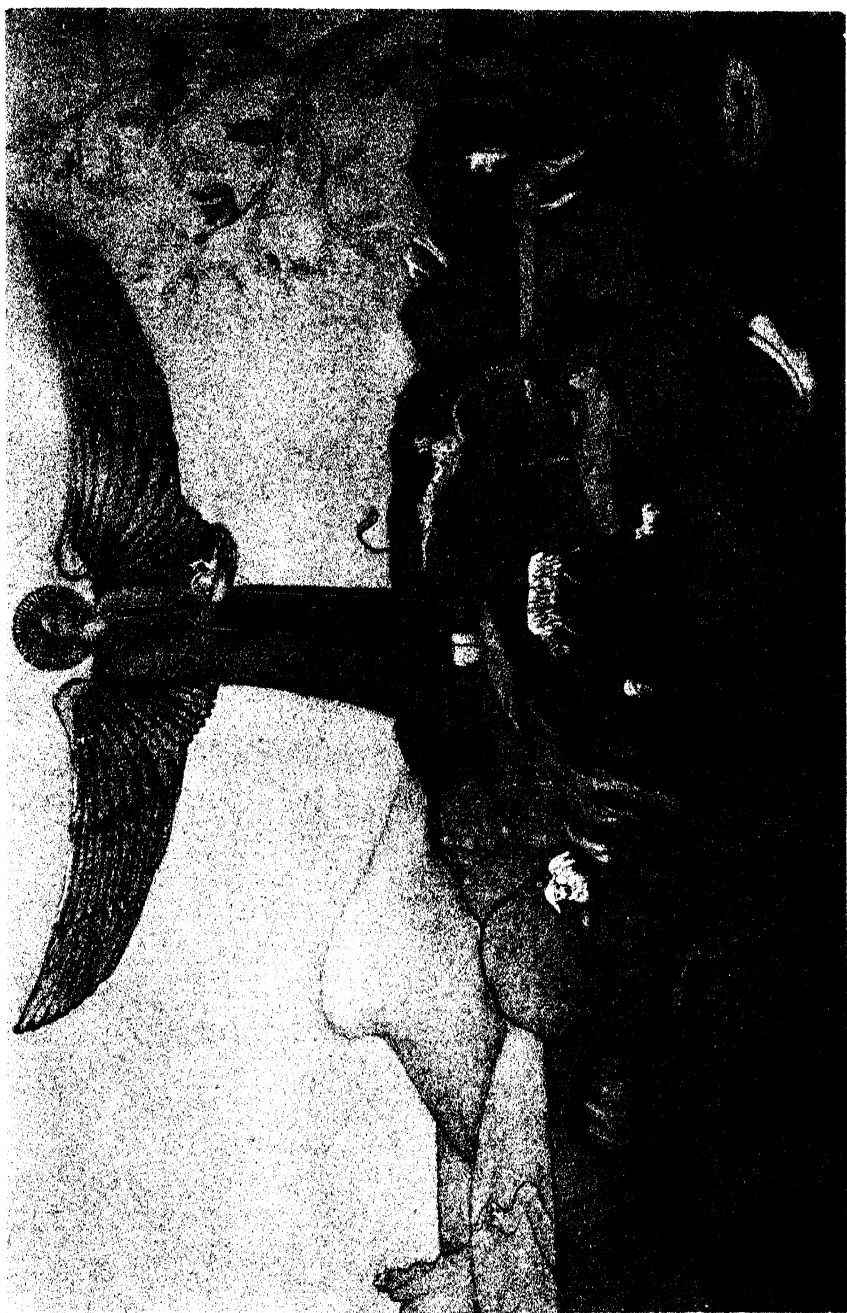


PLATE 12

THE GLORIFICATION

Painted in 1926 for St. Hilary Church, Cornwall
Water Colour, 18 by 12 in.



PLATE 13

THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS

Painted in 1926 for St. Hilary Church, Cornwall

Water Colour, 18 by 12 in.



PLATE 14

‘DAVID’

Drawn in 1925

Pencil, 15 by 12 in.

[*In the possession of Miss Elizabeth Manning*]



PLATE 15

‘HEATHER’

Painted in 1926

Oils, 12 by 10 in.

[*In the possession of the Artist*]



PLATE 16

THE PEDLAR

Painted in 1926

Oils, 17 by 15 in.

[In the possession of George Manning-Sanders]

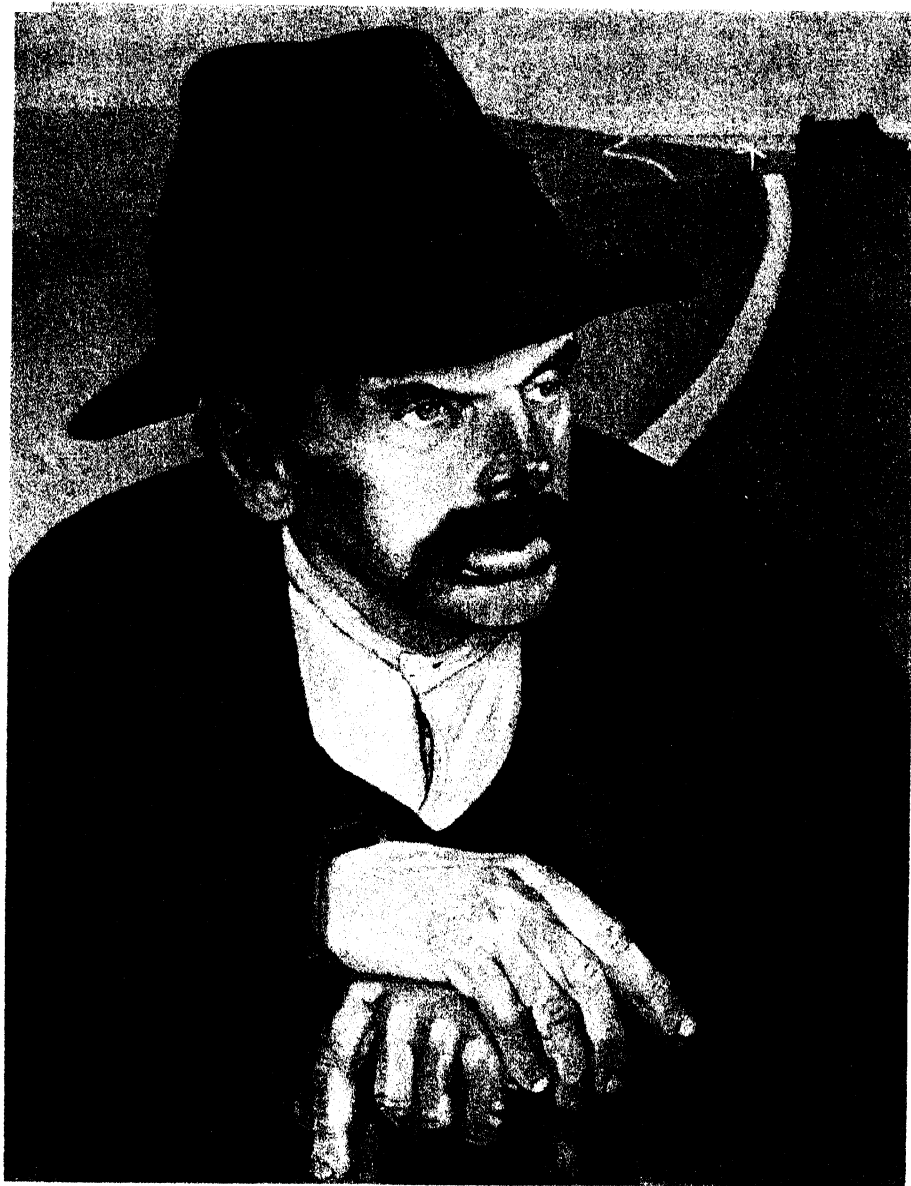


PLATE 17

DAVID AND THE GLOBE

Painted in 1927

Oils, 22 by 22 in.

[*In the possession of Ruth Manning-Sanders*]



PLATE 18

RAVEN AND SKULL (Unfinished)

Painted in 1927

Oils, 22 by 20 in.



PLATE 19

OLD ANDREW

Painted in 1927
Oils, 20 by 18 in.



PLATE 20

'GRACIE'

Painted in 1927
Oils, 30 by 25 in.



PLATE 21

YOUNG ANDREW

Painted in 1927

Oils, 15 by 12 in.



PLATE 22

THE BROTHERS

Painted in 1928

Oils, 36 by 34 in.

[In the possession of Captain Ernest A. Elgee]



PLATE 23

SELF PORTRAIT

Painted in 1928

Oils, 20 by 15 in.



PLATE 24

THE PLOUGHING MATCH

Painted in 1928
Oils, 30 by 22 in.



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H. S. COWPER, ESQ., J.P., F.S.A.

Painted in 1928

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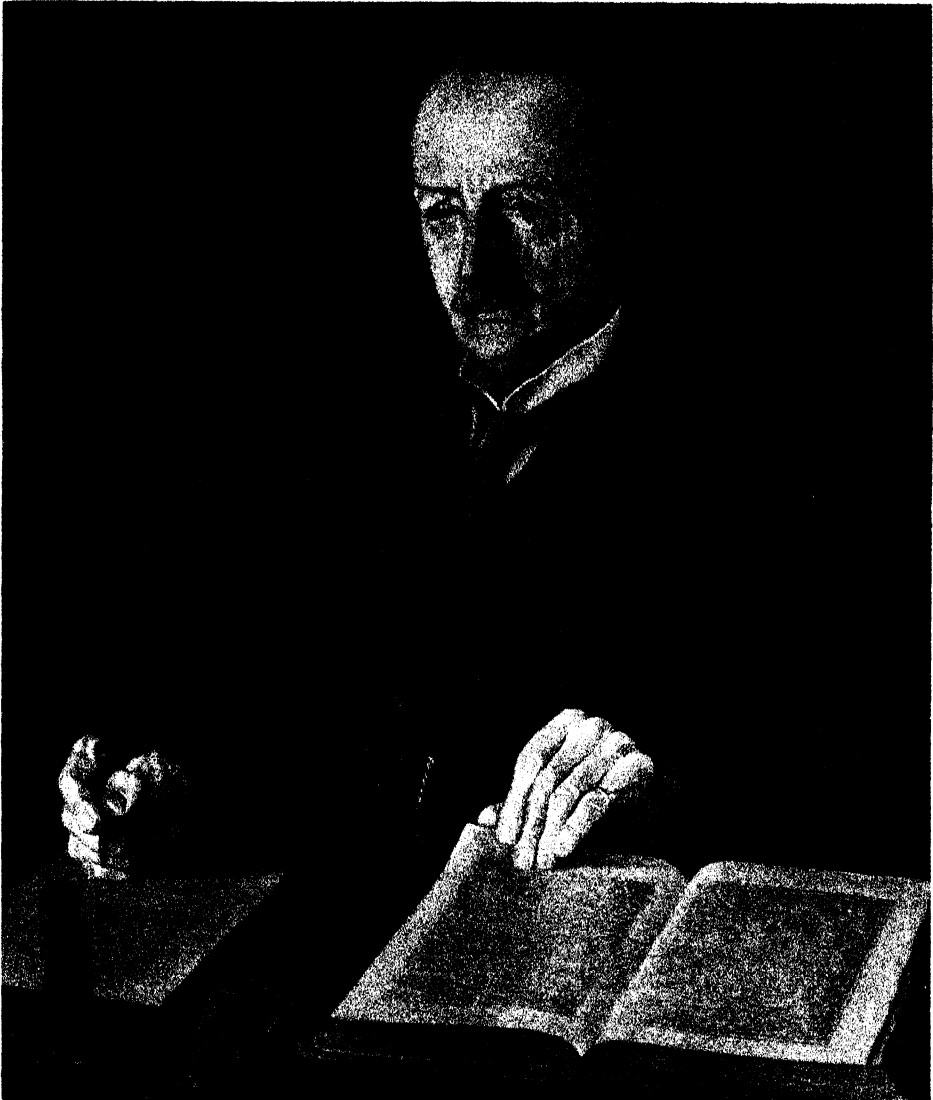


PLATE 26

BERTHA LOUISA

Painted in 1928

Oils, 25 by 17 in.



PLATE 27

‘VELLENDREATH’

Painted in 1928

Oils, 12 by 10 in.



PLATE 28

THE BABY

Painted in 1928
Oils, 22 by 14 in.



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THE CONCERTINA PLAYERS

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Oils, 58 by 56 in.

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PLATE 30

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DETAIL NO. 1 FROM 'THE CONCERTINA PLAYERS'



PLATE 31

DETAIL NO. 2 FROM 'THE CONCERTINA PLAYERS'



PLATE 32

DETAIL NO. 3 FROM 'THE CONCERTINA PLAYERS'



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